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SERMON BY THE LATE REV. GEORGE GRISWOLD.
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ON IDOLATRY:

A Sermon

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2 St. John, v. 21—"*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*"

ON the announcement of this text the imaginations of some may take the alarm. What! they may be ready to exclaim, do you propose to warn a Christian assembly against a practice which has never appeared but in those times and places where darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people? Do you suspect any of us to be in danger of falling into idolatry? Yes; the whole tenor of Scripture authorises such suspicion; and it may be found, before we have dismissed our subject, that there are some, even in this assembly, who have not altogether kept themselves from idols. It may soon appear that idolatry is not so exclusively the sin of particular nations, and of particular periods, as is sometimes supposed; that it is rather the sin which most easily besets human nature; and thence that an exhortation to keep themselves from it is always in season to those who inherit that evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living GOD, which his word so fully describes, and which the actual state of the world so completely illustrates. Our general position is this: that the spirit of idolatry may exist in all its malignancy, and produce a decided rebellion against the sovereignty of Heaven, even when unaccompanied or uninfluenced by a visible form; and this sentiment it will be my endeavor to enlarge upon, illustrate, and apply to the consciousness of every individual.

Man judgeth after the outward appearance; but GOD, who is a Spirit, judgeth all things; he is a discerner of the intents of the heart, and understandeth our thoughts long before we utter them. His claims on the love and obedience of all his intelligent creatures are absolute: they are like his own nature, eternal and immutable. Wherever this love is withheld, therefore; wherever these claims are practically disavowed,—it matters not what principles are set up in their place, nor on what particular objects they are bestowed,—the high and lofty ONE sees there an abandonment of those laws, which are the main pillars of his stupendous moral fabric; the Allseeing Eye perceives the disruption of those sacred ties which give order and consistency to the remotest provinces of his empire. Every act of rebellion is in his sight the signal of an universal revolt; for he sees in every instance of disobedience, the elements of a disorder which, if the contagion were to spread, and become general throughout his dominion, would strip his intelligent creation of its glory; would counteract the very purpose for which he made the worlds, and reduce all that was beautiful and grand in his sublimer workmanship, back again to the hideousness of chaos. No wonder then that he looks down from that awful throne which is high and lifted up, on every act of wilful disobedience, with displeasure and abhorrence; no wonder that He whose omniscient eye, piercing through that immensity which his presence fills, traces the sinful thing to its remote and unseen consequences, should look upon every transgressor with all the severity of his unbending justice; no wonder that the law should begin to utter its thunders when the sacred majesty of the law is threatened with violation. But oh! it is a wonder that, after the rash deed had been accomplished which brought down the just weight of its anathema on our race, after sentence of death had been pronounced the wages of transgression, GOD should still so love the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. And the greatest wonder is,—after all that has been done by GOD to magnify the law and make it honorable; after all that has been suffered by the son of GOD to bring in an everlasting righteousness; after all the striving of his

Holy Spirit to convince the world of sin and reestablish principles of obedience in the bosoms of an apostate race,—that any of them should yet stand in need of the admonition to keep themselves from idols. It is a fact which fills Heaven with amazement, and Hell with triumph. That principle of alienation from God which began the work of death in the garden of Eden, has spread its contagious influence wherever the human race is found; has run its fatal career through generation after generation, till, notwithstanding what has been done by Him who put forth the might of his omnipotence and travailed in the greatness of his strength to arrest its progress, there is, even in this day of Gospel light and glory, among the vast majority of men, an entire alienation of their affections from the supreme and only Potentate. "Hear, O Heavens, and give ear, O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

The comprehensive spirit of Christianity teaches us to generalize on moral subjects, and to classify mankind according to their fundamental principles of action. He who looks upon his fellow men with an understanding enlightened by that word which is a discerner of hearts, will recognise in them but a faint likeness to the holy image which that word holds out; he who compares what he sees in the history of human life, with what he reads in the book of revelation, will see very few deeds that might not have been done had that book never been written. So rare, indeed, is the coincidence between the conduct of human affairs and the known will of God, that if the history of this world's doings were spread out in all its details, an overwhelming proportion of its activity would be found to have owed its first impulse to a principle of alienation from the living God, to which the Scriptures ascribe the attributes, and on which they bestow the denomination, of downright idolatry.

Still the men of a refined and sensitive age, like the present, may shrink from such a charge as this reasoning would imply: it may not be agreeable to believe that,—after so much light from Heaven has been poured upon our world; after the graven images have been utterly abolished, and the grosser forms of superstition

banished from view ; after the condition of society has been so much meliorated, and such wonderful improvements have been made in knowledge and the arts of life ; when Christian institutions with all their becoming observances, have supplanted the absurd and degraded rites of Heathenism, and the charms of refinement have thrown their lustre over the whole aspect of civilized men ; when, in the words of one who was a better politician than he was a theologian, " Vice has lost half its venom, by losing all its grossness,"—it may not be grateful, I say, to believe after all this progress in refinement and grace, that there should still lie against the majority of our species so fearful a charge as this, in all its depth and dimensions. And if an enlightened Christian observer, looking abroad from this vantage ground on some scene of peculiar busy speculation, should, like St. Paul at Athens, have his spirit stirred within him at seeing the city wholly given to idolatry, and should, like him, be moved to raise a note of remonstrance so loud as to awaken an interest to know the result of his observations, they would probably be as much astonished at his doctrine as were the refined and philosophical Athenians, and would probably answer, like them, " Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears." It would serve to dispel much of the delusion on which all this surprise and reluctance is founded, could we see as God seeth, with all these external meliorations, how comparatively small has been the moral improvement of our species! Amidst all these surprising movements towards realising the finest conceptions of philosophy, how little advance has been made towards realising the demands of revelation ! amidst the thousand *forms* of godliness that prevail around us, how little of its *power* is exerted in the human heart ! amidst all the ardor with which the endless varieties of knowledge are pursued, how little is directed to Him, whom to know aright is life eternal ! and amidst all this flood of moral and intellectual light, which has been poured from Heaven upon the habitations of men, we might see how this is only a manifold condemnation, because light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light. When God arises to judge the world in righteousness, and makes manifest the secrets of all hearts, every

mouth shall be stopped, and all the world shall become guilty before him.

Whatever the object be, which stands between a man and his Maker, *that* is the object of his idolatry. Whatever principle so effectually exalts itself in his heart, as to withdraw his affections from GOD, and prevent his being brought into subjection to the obedience of CHRIST; whatever closes his soul against the visitations of the HOLY SPIRIT; whatever it be, whether in Heaven above, or on the earth beneath, which exercises that exclusive jurisdiction over his mind, which belongs to the Supreme and only Potentate, that object, or that principle, is an abomination to the LORD his GOD; and until it be utterly abolished and put away, the LORD, as a mighty and strong one, hath precisely the same controversy with that man which he hath with all who have not kept themselves from idols.

It is readily conceded that, in the gradations of society and in its several stages of outward improvement, this principle may be modified to an almost endless extent, but what we would have you bear in mind is, that in the sight of GOD its evil character and pernicious tendency are *always* the same. The idolatry of a refined and intelligent age may assume a different guise from that of a dark and sensual period. In countries blessed with the light of Christianity, men may not fall down to stocks and stones, nor call in the aid of the painter and the statuary to give a sensible image to the object of their adoration, and yet it is possible that the homage paid by them to an abstract sentiment of honor may be as profound, and the sacrifices offered to it may be as bloody, and as abominable in the sight of GOD, as were ever burnt on the altars of the Druids. Parents may not cause their tender offspring to pass through the fire to Moloch, but they may immolate them before the shrine of Fashion, or consecrate them to the cruel and souldestroying service of the god of this world. And while it raises a cry of horror among us, when from the shores of a distant and benighted land tidings are brought to our ears of some bloody massacre at the car of Juggernaut, while the story of a new sacrifice at the shrine of Superstition, wafted to us from some lonely island of the ocean, communicates a thrill of

virtuous resentment through the bosom of a whole community, it is very possible that, in many bosoms so gracefully and feelingly alive to the degradation of their species, the Allseeing Eye may discern the substantial existence of that very principle which is at the bottom of all this cruelty and abomination. God looks at principles; we regard their effects. When the sinful purpose has embodied itself in action; when sin is finished and bringeth forth death; when it confronts us with the ghastly malignity of its essential character; when hatred puts on the guise of murder, and sensuality grovels as beastly drunkenness, *we cannot help* regarding it with unmingled indignation and horror. But to the Omniscient Mind, under all its disguises, and in all its forms, it is only that spirit which *everywhere* worketh in the children of disobedience. Amidst the latency of a disembodied principle it appears to him only as that accursed thing which his soul abhorreth; and he considers that individual in whose bosom it dwells, and whose conduct it rules, just as truly joined to his idols, as if he bowed down every day to a graven image which his own hands had made.

Having thus established our general position, I proceed to illustrate it in a few particulars:

First. Take that class of our fellow creatures, for example, who are lovers of sensual pleasures more than lovers of God. Read the history of that man's life who has made pleasure his idol, and sacrificed everything at the shrine of selfish gratifications, who, day after day, has sat down to eat and risen up to play, without ever calling to mind the giver of those blessings of which he was in the habitual enjoyment; who, instead of eating and drinking in order to live, lives only to eat and to drink; who is so completely occupied in his pleasures and his appetites that God is not in all his thoughts; who thinks it no profit to pray unto him, and who cares not to serve him; whose glory is in his shame; who minds earthly things, and covets earthly gratifications, and is altogether of the earth, earthly. Peruse the melancholy history of such a life, from beginning to end, and then say what circumstance is wanting to complete that entire alienation of the heart from God which he stigmatises as idolatry. How

could the Supreme be more effectually deposed from his throne than he is from that man's affections? How could he possibly pour greater contempt on all the pure commandments of his Maker than by such a life as we have described? Would it in the least heighten his apostacy, or aggravate his forgetfulness of GOD, were he even to personify his pleasures, or to raise a molten image to his lusts, after the most disgusting example of the ancient idolaters? Would it, in fact, add to the estrangement of his affections from the most high GOD, were he to perform the orgies, and chant the pæans, and adopt all the folly and all the mockery of the former superstition? Were he actually to *embody* the inward conceptions of his lust, and surround them with all the pomp of an outward and visible adoration, would it alter his intrinsic character in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do? No: if the high consideration and honor which belong to GOD, and to him only, are taken away from him, it matters little whether they are bestowed on the devices of a refined sensualism, or on the grosser objects of Pagan idolatry. The Supreme is, in either case, dethroned from his lawful sovereignty, and another reigns in his stead. His holy law is violently torn from that preeminence which it justly claims, and some other principle made to occupy its place. Whether they are the abstract devices of a corrupt imagination, or the personifications of a beastly sensualism, which are thus exalted in the place of Deity, he cannot but look upon the wretched being, who has given himself up to such a wilful delusion, as plunged in all the guilt, and obnoxious to the punishment of those who do not like to retain GOD in their knowledge.

Second. Again, we read of a covetousness, which is idolatry. One of the most decided points in the controversy between mankind and their Maker, is respecting the relative value of the goods of this world. His word has stamped them with the impress of an inferior worth, and most emphatically commands us not to set our hearts upon them; while the constant endeavor of mankind is to exalt them into objects of preeminent importance; to attach to them an inordinate value, and bestow upon the attainment of them their most zealous and persevering labor. Now, of all the

forms of idolatry, as this is the most common, so it is the least excusable. "The covetous man," says an able writer, "is not like the sensualist, goaded on by the power of native appetite, but by the force of a habit which he has himself created. Instead of embarking in the heat of passion, he sits down with all the calmness of calculating principle; he consecrates the best powers of his mind, the noblest faculties of his soul, and the warmest affections of his heart, to the great object of a fortune in this world; he makes the acquirement of gain the settled aim, and the prosecution of that aim the settled habit of his existence. With the wealth he has gotten by his own hands, does he feel himself as independent of GOD as the Pagan does, who, happy in the fancied protection of an image made with his own hand, suffers no disturbance to his quiet from any thought of the real, but the unknown Deity. Baal and Moloch were not more substantially the gods of rebellious Israel, than Mammon is the god of his affections." Nor would it in the least aggravate his forgetfulness of GOD, if the fortune which is first in his thoughts, and uppermost in his desire, were represented by a visible image and enshrined on a pedestal, around which he might assemble his household, and make it the object of their morning and evening devotions. It is thus, my brethren, that GOD may discover the essentials of idolatry amongst the men of a refined and enlightened period; thus may he maintain the charge against us, after the visible tokens of it have been abolished, and the material images of it have been overthrown. No wonder, then, that He who cannot be mocked by a vain show of lip service, while the heart is given to another, should so affectionately warn his children to flee from covetousness; no wonder that He who will not give his glory to another, should direct the exhortation of our text to every kindred and tongue and people, and wherever his name is heard, or his word is read, among the populations of earth, that he should solemnly admonish them, by his apostle, *to keep themselves from idols.*

Third. Again, let us consider the case of some who have exalted *themselves* into the place of the Deity. That mysterious and incomprehensible being called "*self*," fixing the strong founda-

tions of its empire in the pride of the human heart, rules over the lives and destinies of men with despotic sway. It exhibits an hundred shapes, and has an almost endless multiplicity of operations, but is at bottom the same principle of corrupt and selfish pride. In one it is the pride of opinion, in another the pride of learning, in another the pride of wealth, in another the pride of stations, in another the pride of fashion, and in another the pride of personal accomplishment, which seduce their affections away from Him, who is chiefest among ten thousand. Their hearts are as truly devoted to the service of another, distinct and separate from the God of Heaven, as if the invisible idol which they worship were wrought into one great collossal statue, whose head should reach the heavens, and he should stand one foot upon the earth, and the other upon the sea, and call upon all nations to bow down and do him homage. Among this crowd of worshippers, we will single out as the subject of our last illustration,

Fourth. The man who has enthroned his own intellect in the place of God. We have already defined idolatry to be the substitution of some other principle for obedience to the Supreme Lawgiver. And I apprehend the whole extent of the definition may be realized in the case of him who follows the devices of his own heart, the deductions of his own reason, or the lifting up of his own imagination, as well as of him who has "made gold his hope, and said, to the fine gold, thou art my confidence." There are those who have set themselves down to the acquisition of knowledge precisely as the covetous man to heaping up treasures, and labored as earnestly at the post of their ardent and unremitting exertions; who have contemplated their increasing stock of literature, with the eye of selfcomplacency, which the other casts upon his glittering hoards; and have allowed their intellectual gains and their growing reputation to separate just as effectually between them and God, as do the treasures of the most hardened votary of Mammon. Although there seems but little danger at present of this form of idolatry becoming universal, from the general reluctance of our species to cultivate their intellectual powers, still, wherever its dominion is once established over the human mind, so deeply are its foundations laid in the nature of man; so consonant is the exertion of

the intellect to the true purpose of our existence; so specious and seductive are its reasonings, and so grateful the incense it ministers to personal vanity, that its strong holds are impregnable to every weapon but that invincible word, which is mighty through God to the casting down of imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the jurisdiction of the Supreme. Idolatry, under all its modifications, consists in worshipping the creature more than the Creator; and if there be an instance which he regards with most peculiar abhorrence, it must be where those very Godlike powers of reason and intelligence, which he has bestowed to conduct us to himself, are basely perverted for the purpose of alienating us from him—are made to conspire in banishing him from his lawful dominions; where those rational and immortal faculties, which were given that we might know Him the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, are leagued together in the act of disowning and rebelling against him!—But, on the other hand, if there be on this earth one sight more lovely than the rest, and one over which superior beings might pause, and contemplate with satisfaction, it is that man, endowed with rare genius and of exalted attainments, who has consecrated his power, and subordinated his attainments; who has cast down his imaginations and submitted his desire and counted them but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; who, not ashamed of the Gospel, nor stumbling at the humiliation of the Cross, has applied himself to the record which God gave of his Son, and devoted to the work the powers of his comprehensive mind, with all the patience, docility, and submission of a little child; and thus shown himself to be one of the blessed number who have kept themselves from idols, and of whom it is written that, *of such* is the kingdom of Heaven.

Having now, beloved friends, unfolded and illustrated the doctrine of our text, the applications of it must devolve chiefly upon your own conscience. Every individual best knows what objects they are which have wound their insidious way into the deep recesses of his soul, and seduced it from allegiance to its Maker. Every individual knows what principle is exalted into the highest place of his affections, and claims the jurisdiction of supreme

lawgiver. Those objects, and those principles, are the main points in the controversy, that is now pending between you and your Maker. By virtue of his relation as your creator and preserver, He claims the absolute possession of your hearts; He demands the first and most devoted homage of your rational powers; He insists that his will shall be the rule of your actions, and his word the guide of your life; and if you have hitherto permitted any created thing to occupy the place of preeminence which belongs to Him, he now most affectionately and most solemnly enjoins upon you to put it away.

We recoil from an open idolater, as from one whose breath is pestilential; as from one who is smitten with a judicial curse; and when we read the history of the dark ages of the world, when men bowed themselves down before the dumb idols which their own hands had made, our hearts rise indignant at the shameful prostration of human reason; when we hear accounts from those dark places of the earth, which are even now filled with the habitations of cruelty, all the better feelings of our souls are stirred with emotion at the bloody sway which Superstition wields over apostate man. But take the principle now developed, home to your *own bosoms*, let this candle of the LORD search the deep places of your souls and bring to light the hidden causes which have withdrawn your allegiance from the living GOD, then let him who is without sin among us cast the first stone at the benighted inhabitants of India. Happy is the man who can sincerely lay his hand upon his heart and say there is nothing which stands between it and his Maker. Blessed is the man who *has kept himself from idols.* That this blessing may be ours, GOD mercifully grant through JESUS CHRIST. Amen.

DEATH PREFERABLE TO LIFE:

A Sermon

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Job vii. 16—"*I would not live always.*"

THERE are few stronger principles in the human breast than the love of life. The desire of selfpreservation is instinctive, and operates long before reason dawns, or experience attaches us to the pleasures of existence. As it precedes the exercise of natural affections, so it is sometimes found to overcome and outlive the kind and social feelings of the soul. How strong and lasting in its nature, and how tender and constant in its exercise, is maternal affection? Time or distance will not weaken it, nor the ingratitude or misconduct of its beloved object destroy its attachment; and yet it can be extinguished by the stronger instinct, the desire of selfpreservation. It would be incredible, were it not a recorded truth of history, that a famishing mother would appease her hunger with the flesh of her own children. The melancholy record proves that of all natural principles none is more powerful than the innate love of life.

Nor are men attached to life merely by the principle of instinct. "I could willingly die," said an expiring Christian, "were there not friends, to whom it is hard to say *farewell.*" Life is made pleasant, and attachment to it is strengthened, by friendship and the social relations. Confirmed habits of honorable and useful employment, the prospect of doing good, and the apparent and real dependence of others upon them, may make men loth to die.

And then our fears have exhibited death with terrific aspect, and surrounded it with horrid drapery. The coffin, the shroud, the darkness and dampness, the silence and coldness of the grave, the worm and the corruption, and the untried and eternal state into which death introduces the soul, are circumstances calculated to make the stoutest heart recoil, and cling with closest grasp upon

its hold of life. But these attachments and apprehensions are incident to our frailty. Through the grace of God, they may be overcome and renounced. The *believer in* CHRIST can say *I would not live alway.*

There is the greatest wisdom in this choice, since should he live alway, THE EVILS OF THE PRESENT LIFE COULD BE PROLONGED AND PERPETUATED; AND

HIMSELF DEBARRED FROM THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY, *can the Christian say, to endure forever the evils of life. I would not live alway*, exposed to the evils incident to this mortal body—under the continual infliction of GOD'S original curse upon man, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread:" or perpetually exposed to the ravages of the "pestilence that walketh in darkness," and to the violence of the "sickness that wasteth at noonday:"—to be forever a partaker of that nature whose beauty is a "fading flower,"—whose "strength" is "labor and sorrow,"—whose eyes fail through dimness, and whose ears grow dull of hearing, and whose head totters with infirmity, and whitens with the frosts of age,—whose limbs are scorched with fever, and racked with pain, and then chilled with ague, and shaken with anguish,—to be frozen by the severity of winter and burn by the fervor of summer,—to inhale sickness from the wind, and disease from the tempest,—to be forever the child of misfortune, and the victim of adversity.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY, *the subject of mental infirmity.* What ignorance beclouds the mind of wretched man! How much carefulness and painstaking must be expended, before he can be taught things the most necessary to be known! How much dullness must be quickened, and obstinacy overcome, and disinclination removed, before he can be successfully instructed! And provided disposition and industry keep pace with opportunity and duty, what is the perfection of his knowledge but the discovery of his ignorance? After his most careful investigations, and his profoundest researches, Forgetfulness, with a besom of destruction, soon sweeps o'er memory's tablet, and obliterates his choicest lessons of wisdom. His most highly cultivated faculties sink into imbecility, and his mind into the dotage of age. How often is his judgment, even in its most vigorous exercise, erring and im-

perfect! Frequent are his mistakes, and erroneous his conclusions, even in affairs of the utmost importance, and which intimately concern his own welfare. Imperfect man errs, even when the error produces his ruin; and mistakes, even when the mistake is the sacrifice of his happiness.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY, *in the midst of a selfish and malignant world*,—where my conduct is misrepresented, my motives misunderstood, my character assailed, and my best interests injured and obstructed,—where Envy displays her malignant features, and Detraction employs her envenomed tongue to destroy my reputation,—where Jealousy invents, and Malice contrives, their cruel purposes to disturb my peace.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY, *the witness, as well as the subject of human miseries.* It is painful to the benevolent heart to witness the misfortunes and follies of men. It is painful to see infancy and innocence suffering pain and sickness—to see them cut off just as life begins to open, and deposited in the cold sepulchre. It is painful to see youth and loveliness, gradually sinking under the dominion of disease; to see the bright eyes grow dim, and the cheeks of health become pale. It is painful to "discern, among the youth, a young man void of understanding," wasting his patrimony in extravagance and dissipation; degrading the noble faculties of body and mind, with which GOD has endowed him; and descending prematurely down to the grave, and to the shades of eternal death, the victim of accursed intemperance. It is painful to witness the ravings of lunacy, and the frenzy of the maniac; to see the mind, the noblest work of GOD, in ruins; its intricate and mysterious mechanism disordered, and its harmony and balance destroyed. It is painful to see the impenitent and prayerless sinner, careless of his rebellion, and thoughtless of his danger, sporting with the menaces of JEHOVAH, and mocking at the threatenings of the ALMIGHTY, and yet to know that between him and eternal burnings there only intervenes,—what is liable to be sundered at any moment,—the thin fragile veil of flesh.

Well may the Christian, the witness of such spectacles, and himself the *servant of unholy passions*, declare, I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY. When his faith is firm, doubts and obscurities will sometimes arise and weaken it. When his hopes are bright, sin

and impenitence will obscure and darken them. When his love to GOD and men is fervent, unholy feelings will spring up, and dampen and allay it. When the Sun of Righteousness shines upon him, his iniquities will often arise like a thick cloud, envelope him in spiritual darkness, and leave him in mental misery.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY, *exposed to temptations and enticements to sin.* The alluring example of men whom, for some good qualities, the Christian has been taught to respect, will offer its persuasions to divert him from the path of life. He will be in danger of being corrupted from "the simplicity in CHRIST," by pernicious doctrines, bearing the semblance of truth, and recommended by all that can give weight to human authority, or respectability to human character. Learning, and intelligence, and wit, and persuasion, will be employed by those, who in appearance are angels of light, to weaken his allegiance to his crucified Master.

Himself the subject and witness of misery and sin, the Christian will say, I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY, especially since GOD *has otherwise determined.* His daily prayer will be, "My Father, who art in Heaven, thy will be done;" and acquiescence in the will of GOD, will constitute the perfection of his religious character. He will therefore desire to depart from this wretched life, knowing that GOD has prepared some better thing for him than its miseries; and that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the imagination of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love him.

There is wisdom in the Christian's choice, for, should his life not terminate, HE WOULD NOT BE ADMITTED INTO THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

His corruptible body would not then put on incorruption nor his mortal, immortality. Of the appearance of CHRIST'S glorious body, in the likeness of which the bodies of all the faithful are to be hereafter fashioned, but a brief account is given in the sacred Scriptures; sufficient, however, to convince us, since the future bodies of the saints are to be like that of CHRIST, that our most vivid and exalted conceptions of this world's splendor, fall infinitely short of the glory which shall be revealed in them. What earthly grandeur and majesty ever equalled the transfiguration of

CHRIST, when his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. It is not then the language of figure but of fact, which Christians will realize, if they are *faithful* members of CHRIST'S mystical body, when it is said, "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun; they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars forever and ever." The Savior said that the children of the resurrection will be equal to the angels, and therefore will resemble angels in their glory and beauty. Like the angels, they will be endowed with youth and unabated activity; eternal youth, and perpetual vigor, experiencing neither weariness or decay. Who then would not join the Christian in his joyful exclamation, *I would not live alway*, since, by dying, he will resemble the sun in splendor, and flourish like angels in immortal youth?

In Heaven, the faculties of the mind, as well as those of the body, will in a wonderful measure be strengthened and perfected. If this vile body, the subject of infirmity and disease, and which is soon to be mingled with the dust, is to be reanimated and restored to more than pristine dignity and excellence,—is to shine as the light, and to be like the ascended body of the King of Glory,—how much higher improvement and elevation are to be received and attained by the mind? If the inferior obtains such honor, what must that be which will be conferred upon the superior part of man? Advanced to a world where error is never known, and where truth, eternal and unvarying, is ever presented to the attention, the judgment will never mistake, nor lead astray.

The memory, perfected and made retentive, will preserve whatever is committed to its trust. The understanding, thus aided by the other mental powers, redeemed and invigorated, will be making perpetual advances in knowledge. For not only will the faculties of the mind be improved, but the field of investigation will be proportionably enlarged. The scene of observation and improvement will not be this little earth, and its limited productions, but the wonders and glories of the celestial regions. *I would not live alway*, in prospect of such an increase of knowledge and intelligence, the perpetual subject of mental imperfection, of ignorance and weakness. There are mysteries in Providence, in nature and redemption, which will in Heaven be explained. I

would then rather depart thither, where I shall know, even also as I am known.

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY, *away from my home.* How many pleasing associations, and tender recollections, are awakened by the mention of home. Around what place do the affections linger with such strong attachment, or what spot looks bright and happy, when the rest of the world appears dark and cheerless, but that characterized by the expressive word home? Where do the skies wear a peculiar brightness, and Nature present peculiar cheerfulness and loveliness, but at home?

Home is a place of *friendship.* There the youthful affections are first called into exercise, and the kindness with which they are reciprocated, awakens attachments that will long be cherished and perpetuated.

It is a place of *security.* Living in friendship, the inmates of home are secure from the mutual attacks of slander and misrepresentation. It is secure from that false invective, which embitters so much of the intercourse with a censorious and misjudging world.

It is a place of *confidence.* Bound together by common interests, and secure of each other's friendship, among the inmates of home, what room can there be for distrust?

It is a place of *peace.* Where Affection presides, Peace is her certain attendant, and will make home,

The place of *happiness.* That place cannot be miserable, where friendship, security, confidence, and peace are found to dwell.

The mention of home will awaken the recollection of the honored father, who counselled and supported; of the kind mother, who consoled and cherished; and of the society and sweet converse of brothers and sisters.

But Heaven is the Christian's home. Here, he is a stranger and a sojourner; but he is travelling to a city which hath foundations, the abode of friendship and peace. *Divine love* is the sacred principle that animates all hearts in the regions of bliss, from the "rapt seraph" to him who has "washed his robes in the blood of the Lamb." It unites the inhabitants of Heaven in an indissoluble bond of harmony, and attaches them to GOD himself.

Security also is there. Security from the influence of unholy

affections. Into Heaven, sinful passions, which here make the human bosom the abode of wretchedness, can never intrude. There will be security from the temptations and hostility of wicked men, and from the enmity and malice of the great spiritual foe. With the Prince of Peace, *peace* shall ever reign, and from the right hand of GOD shall flow the river of his *pleasures* forevermore.

I would not live alway separated from my pious friends, in whose sacred society, and holy friendship, I found such delight and profit, but who have preceded me in their entrance into glory. For in Heaven the pious friendships of this world shall be renewed and perpetuated. Children will be restored to their parents, and parents will again rejoice in the presence and esteem of their children. Ah, how fully will the pious mother be rewarded for all her prayerful watchings, and kind assiduities, and untiring solicitude, when, in the world of light and glory, she shall find that, of the children GOD has given her, not one is lost, but each one is there, with the crown of life upon his head, the palm of victory in his hand, and in his mouth the new song of salvation!

In Heaven will be enjoyed the society of the pious and holy of all ages—of Adam, the first and great father of the human family; of Noah, the progenitor of a new world; of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish people, and the father of the faithful of all nations; of Moses, who talked with GOD, face to face: of David, the sweet singer of Israel; of a host of prophets and apostles, of whom were we to speak, time would fail us: of Paul, who labored in the cause of his Master, more abundantly than all others, and who now wears a richer crown; of those holy martyrs of the primitive Church; of that multitude of Christian worthies, of whom the world was not worthy; of the heroic reformers from the corruptions of popery, who counted not their lives dear to themselves; of the devoted modern missionaries of the Cross, who have given an example of apostolic zeal and heroism: of Brainard, the early apostle to the neglected and abused aborigines of this country; and of Martyn and Heber, names which will long be embalmed in the endeared recollection of Christians. And could the Heavens be spread, and our faith be lost in sight, we should see them clothed in robes of light, and hear them, with hearts of love, and tongues of fire, singing hallelujah, hallelujah to the Lamb.

I would not live alway, for in the midst of that holy brotherhood is JESUS CHRIST, their elder brother, the faithful and true witness; that JESUS, the desire and Savior of all nations; and whom I desire to see; my Savior! to whom, I have so often prayed, and in whom I have so long trusted; Him who has for years been my invisible teacher and defence, and whom, though not seeing, yet have I loved!

With what profit and pleasure do I read the words of CHRIST, as recorded by his apostles; much greater would have been my satisfaction to have heard, like his personal followers, his instructive conversation, and to have sat at his sacred feet, like the attentive and commended Mary. What then will be the enraptured delight, and holy ecstacy, conferred by his presence and fellowship in Heaven?

Is there a glorious company of apostles now praising GOD, and would I live alway, in this state of misery, and be excluded from their society? Is there a noble army of martyrs now surrounding the Father of Spirits, and would I live alway, and be prevented from joining their song of adoration? Is there a goodly fellowship of prophets, arrayed in white, and now praising GOD, and would I live alway, and exclude myself from their blissful employment? Are there the redeemed of every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, around the throne of GOD, enjoying the felicity of his immediate presence, and increasing in knowledge and happiness —and would I live alway in ignorance and wretchedness? And could those redeemed ones answer us from the thrones of their glory, would they say, "We would have lived alway?" Can children desire to remain away from their home,—or pilgrims from their own country,—or travellers from the end of their journey,—or citizens from their citizenship,—or heirs from their heritage? No!—*I would not live alway*, since to die is such gain; and in prospect of the glory to be so soon revealed, my heart exclaims, *Come quickly, even so come*, LORD JESUS!

CHRISTIANS,—you, who are renewed in heart and life, who are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and who are now led by the Spirit,—ye shall not live alway. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD shall deliver him out of them all. Ye shall not live alway, groaning in this earthly tabernacle, but

ye shall soon be clothed upon, with your house from Heaven. Look at the sun, as he goes forth in his strength—thus shall ye soon shine forth in glory and immortality. Look at the stars, as at night they beautify the heavens—thus shall ye soon shine forever and ever. Ye shall not alway be the subject of mental weakness and error, for ye shall soon be like the angels. Ye shall not alway be the servants of sin, since ye shall soon enter into rest, and cease from sin. Ye shall not alway be the witnesses, as well as the subjects of human wretchedness, for ye shall arrive at those regions, where there is neither pain, nor crying, nor death. Ye shall not alway be absent from your home, but shall go to JESUS CHRIST, and to his Father, and your Father; to his GOD, and your GOD. Instead of the thorny path of this life, your feet shall soon tread the golden streets of the Holy City; and instead of lamentation and complaint, your mouths shall soon be filled with the song of Moses and the Lamb.

MY BRETHREN: You cannot live alway; though the impenitent and worldly will say, "We would live alway. Give us enough of this world, and we wish for none better. Give us the riches and honors and pleasures of the world, and we should never wish to die." But what would you be profited, should you gain the whole world, and lose your own souls? It is appointed unto men to die. What do the vacant seat at the fireside, and the added stone at the burial place, teach, but that death is in every family? It is appointed unto men to die. You may banish the thought from your minds, and yet you must die. You may live in impenitence and opposition to GOD, and yet you must die. You may live in the neglect of prayer, and the word of GOD, and make no preparation for the awful reality, and yet you must die. It is appointed unto men to die. But after death the judgment. As death leaves you, so will the judgment find you. There is no repentance, nor faith, nor hope, in the grave to which you are hastening. Death, judgment—eternity—heaven—hell—happiness,—misery of a soul that can never die,—are tremendous realities. May GOD write the important lesson they should teach, upon the hearts of us all, and prepare us for our great change, through his infinite mercy in CHRIST JESUS our LORD. Amen.

THE proprietor of the PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL PULPIT having felt, in common with his brethren of the Church, the need of well qualified Clergymen, and the inadequacy of means provided for defraying the expenses of Theological education to poor and pious young men of the Episcopal Communion; has been led to think that, as this periodical is indebted for its character and usefulness to the *gratuitous* contributions of gentleman of the Clergy, whose feelings would be justly offended by any direct offer of pecuniary compensation, the best, and most delicate, return that he can make for their kindness in furnishing sermons for the work is to appropriate a portion of its profits to the benefit of the Church at large.

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